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In recent years, insurgency and counterinsurgency have been the topics of conversations regarding military theory and doctrine and the subject of diplomatic efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. The American armed forces, having avoided counterinsurgency warfare since the end of the Vietnam War, were caught unprepared for this type of conflict, preferring instead to train for war with the Soviet Union. This paper seeks to briefly consider counterinsurgency operations in the CENTCOM Theater of operations since the invasion of Afghanistan, and to evaluate some successes and failures. This paper seeks to answer a number of questions regarding the ethics and propriety of counterinsurgency operations.

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Contents

Abstract

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Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in the Current Era of Conflict

Since the start of the current military conflicts – whether one refers to them collectively as the "Global War on Terror" or as "Overseas Contingency Operations" is largely irrelevant – insurgency and counterinsurgency have been the subject of much military thought, theory, and doctrine, possibly to the detriment of other warfighting functions. Since the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, insurgencies have continued to plague United States military operations, renewing interest in authors like David Galula and establishing a following for authors like John Nagl. In the era following the Vietnam War, the US military turned away from counterinsurgency warfare; civilian and military leadership chose instead to focus on the possibility of war with the former Soviet Union, and the battles between armored divisions such a conflict would involve. The purpose of this paper is to examine counterinsurgency doctrine since September 11th, 2001, and to analyze its successes and failures. This paper will seek to answer a number of questions, for example: Are the US Armed Forces prepared to effectively engage in counterinsurgency warfare? Should the US Armed Forces be employed to perform counterinsurgency operations in the CENTCOM Theater of operations, especially considering the status of the economy of the United States? This paper will further attempt to demonstrate that, as counterinsurgency operations are long-term, ethically dubious, and expensive investments, that neither the United States military nor the American Public are adequately prepared to perform them successfully. As an alternative, this paper argues that large-scale, long-term counterinsurgency operations can be conducted successfully with careful coordination between the United States military, other government agencies, international government organizations, and

nongovernmental organizations; this paper will specifically discuss joint, interagency initiatives directed towards the establishment of the rule of law in host nations.

Counterinsurgency Redux

The types of conflicts fought in Iraq and Afghanistan are not new; recent scholarship has provided studies of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies that predate the Roman Empire. Nor are these conflicts limited to engagements between Western and Non-western powers; there is history of uprisings in India, China, Japan, and in African nations that do not involve colonial powers[1]. The metrics applied to the conflicts in which the United States is engaged were formulated by the French officer David Galula, who published his findings in *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*[2]*.* Galula served as a Lieutenant Colonel and had assignments in North Africa, Italy, and France in World War II. The author argues the importance of establishing the legitimacy of the host nation government as the provider of services, security, and stability; "If the insurgent manages to dissociate the population from the counterinsurgent, to control it physically, to get its active support, he will win the war". This is because the support of the population is the ultimate goal; "in the final analysis, the exercise of power depends on the tacit or explicit agreement of the population". Galula advised the Army Staff and civilian military leadership on issues regarding counterinsurgency prior to the buildup of ground troops in Vietnam. Galula's work was incorporated into the thought and writings of Andrew Krepinevich, Jr., who adopted Galula's definitions of insurgency and counterinsurgency and broke the concept of an insurgency into three distinct phases: contention, equilibrium, and counteroffensive. He applies his metrics to the Army's performance in Southeast Asia in his book *The Army and Vietnam,* arguing that the

Army failed in the conflict because they did not understand the war they were fighting[3]. Rather than working towards establishing the legitimacy of the government of South Vietnam and gaining the support of the Vietnamese people, Army leadership feared a repeat of fighting similar to that experienced during the Korean War; the US Military trained the Vietnamese to fight on a conventional battlefield. These lessons are applicable to operations conducted in the CENTCOM Theater since 2001; civilian defense officials and military leadership did not immediately understand the type of war they were fighting, attempting to apply doctrine to conflict in both countries that was inappropriate to the situation. John Nagl conducted similar research when writing *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*; the author argued that the Army relied too much on branch-specific doctrine and was not a learning organization; like Krepinevich, Nagl argues that the Army spent far too much effort attempting to train the South Vietnamese Army for and to prepare themselves for fighting similar to that of the Korean War. He compares the American armed forces to those of the British; Nagl uses the British as an example of an Army that is both a learning institution and successful in counterinsurgency operations.

This lack of understanding of asymmetric warfare continued into the current era; the armed forces largely neglected training in counterinsurgency warfare after Vietnam, opting instead to train to respond to the threat from the former Soviet Union. Senior defense officials developed doctrine to coordinate the armed forces in concert against conventional forces, referring to this as AirLand battle. After the fall of the Soviet Union, defense policy based training and manning requirements on the ideas behind the "revolution in Military Affairs", and later, "transformation", where ground forces became

modular and the focus moved from the division to the brigade combat team. This type of preparation proved successful on the battlefields of the Gulf War, where the Army and coalition troops fought against the Iraqi army, and again in the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003. Counterinsurgency operations were relegated to discussions of low-intensity conflicts and Military Operations Other Than War. However, the operational plan for the 2003 campaign failed to account for stability operations in the wake of the successful invasion, also failing to anticipate the rise of an insurgency during the stability phase of operations; the US armed forces were unprepared to deal with threats from within the population. All of these mistakes are indicative of a failure to review or understand General Zinni's considerations regarding small wars; especially relevant is Zinni's suggestion that commanders and agency principals "start planning as early as possible, including everyone in the planning process".

Much of the blame for the failure of the military to recognize the nature of the conflict after the conclusion of conventional combat operations is attributed to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and L. Paul Bremer, the principal at the Coalition Provisional Authority. Despite their positions of authority, these individuals were not familiar enough with Iraq, Afghanistan, their cultures, or their histories[4]. The inability of the Army and of the civilian leadership in the Department of Defense to adequately deal with large scale counterinsurgency operations eventually led to the revision of the counterinsurgency field manual by General David Petraeus. After this major revision, troop strength in Iraq was increased substantially.

After demonstrating some success, the surge strategy was attempted in Afghanistan, first under the leadership of General McChrystal, then under Petraeus'

own guidance. During this campaign, Petraeus was able to refer to previous successes achieved during the campaign in Iraq, specifically those involving joint and interagency coordination. In Afghanistan, attempts were made to coordinate efforts between military and diplomatic entities, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector in order to establish the legitimacy of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. In trying to overcome government corruption and to build a foundation in the rule of law, a number of organizations worked together, to include the US military, the Department of State, the United State Agency for International Development, the US Department of Justice, the Afghan Ministry of Justice, Bar Association, Kabul University, and civilian contractors; this network was later expanded further to include NATO partners.

Civil-Military Operations

In current training, there is an emphasis on interagency cooperation; this is in keeping with Dr. Killcullen's fundamental which states that one should "build trusted networks," and applies not only to US agencies, but to intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and to community organizations within the host nation. Contingency operations cannot be brought to a successful conclusion by only one branch of the armed forces – or by the armed forces alone. Interagency coordination can facilitate the establishment of security, the implementation of essential services, and the development of agribusiness. Further, nongovernmental organizations can provide emergency services and medical care; intergovernmental organizations can provide funding and track the progress of economic development. The community and economic development community is well aware of the importance of these

relationships; the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations all participate in initiatives to support developing economies, even in host nations that are engaged in counterinsurgency activities. An important aspect in the relationships between the military and the community of international government organizations and nongovernmental organizations is the trust between the participating agencies, the nodes of the network; accountability is another issue. The network of joint and interagency coordination must maintain the trust of the populace and avoid the appearance of impropriety, lest the efforts of the network become tainted, calling into question the very government the initiatives are trying to legitimize.

Such coordination between civilian agencies and military organizations was plainly evident during operations in Afghanistan, especially those pertaining to rule of law initiatives. As stated above, rule of law teams may involve – and have involved – participants from the armed forces, the Departments of State and Justice, NATO partners, civilian law enforcement professionals, and local law schools and bar associations[5]. Despite there being some friction between various participants, efforts were made to expand voting and women's rights and to address the perception of corruption in the justice sector. There were projects directed towards equipping the Afghan National Security Forces, literacy projects for the armed forces and police forces, and continuing legal education provided for judges and prosecutors. There was an effort to put a local national face on each campaign as well; Afghan attorneys were employed by contract in order to travel through the districts and conduct training, as well as to survey the local populations in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs.

Stability Operations

Establishing the legitimacy of the host-nation government is an essential part of countering an insurgency, as the fundamental goal of the operation is the support of the people. Instituting the rule of law, ending corruption, and fortifying the judicial sector are major steps towards accomplishing this goal, which is in keeping with Dr. Killcullen's fundamental that the counterinsurgent should "fight the enemy's strategy, not his forces". Strengthening the population's faith in the justice sector turns them away from the alternative judicial system offered by the Taliban, ISIS, or Al Qaeda.

While in Iraq, Petraeus focused a great deal of time and effort on rebuilding the local infrastructure. He was especially concerned with those agencies which provided essential services, like power and sanitation. In keeping with what he had learned through years of study and his time in Mosul, Petraeus also began initiatives to put those who had grown disenchanted with Al-Qaeda in Iraq and other insurgent groups to work, offering them money for information or for providing security.

Successes and Failures

The general opinion regarding Petraeus' counterinsurgency strategy is that, while it was somewhat successful in Iraq, it failed in Afghanistan. This is only partially true; some of the work done during the surge was successful and had a positive effect on the perception of legitimacy of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The efforts towards establishing the rule of law are well documented and analyzed; interagency coordination between the Departments of State and Defense and other organizations brought about a number of positive changes to the Afghan judicial system.

However, the stability operations conducted during the surge, and especially those conducted under the umbrella of rule of law initiatives, were not without their problems. The international community did not respond quickly enough after the fall of the Taliban; in future stability operations and rule of law initiatives, there must be attention to the immediate period after combat operations. The justice sector must be assessed and assisted as quickly as possible, as lack of a justice system contributes to a sense of anarchy when the fighting is over. Many of the programs were designed to address specific issues within the judicial system, but failed to improve the faith of the populace in the fairness and impartiality of the justice sector. An important note is that the network of organizations that support and conduct rule of law initiatives must focus on the value of their programs and projects to the populace of the host nation, not on the number of programs in which the network is actively engaged. Funding might be readily available; the Petraeus doctrine of counterinsurgency was keen on the idea of "Money as a Weapons System", but money is *a* tool, not *the* tool, which ensures success. A great deal of effort and expense was dedicated to what have been referred to as "first-generation" rule of law projects: building legal libraries, courthouses, and other tangible projects. Regarding the issue of financing counterinsurgency, stability, and rule of law initiatives, there was a failure of the network created by the international community in that the United States' partner nations did not fulfill their promised contributions, leaving the American armed forces and agencies with the bill; this particular allocation of nodes on the network did not work as planned.

The "second-generation" of projects attempts to address more abstract issues, like government corruption and citizen faith in the justice sector; these issues stem from

a larger lack of faith in the concept of a nation within Afghan society. The populace must become invested citizens, with a common identity as Afghans; the citizens of Afghanistan tend to self-identify with their districts or provinces, but not with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Western individualistic thought is the basis of the liberal political tradition; individual rights are a part of the concept of citizenship. This might seem foreign to an Iraqi, who might have lived under the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and then under the terror of Al Qaeda in Iraq or the Islamic State; the concept of rights might seem more alien to an Afghan, who might've lived under the Soviet Occupation and the Taliban, then seen the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the corruption in the system. Rule of law initiatives conducted by an Afghan-led leadership network have been directed towards the "second-generation" projects mentioned above. Army rule of law attorneys have liaised with Afghan attorneys, local bar associations, Kabul University, and the local state and traditional courts and judges.

Ambassador Karl Eikenberry has been a vocal critic of the surge strategy in Afghanistan. Eikenberry served as both a combatant commander and as a US ambassador; he wrote of the clear goals but poor implementation of the Afghan surge; the goal of making Afghanistan a "state inhospitable to terrorist organizations" was clear enough, the "attainment" of that goal "has been vexing" (Eikenberry, 2013, p. 1). In Afghanistan, other goals were less clear; what were the surge forces protecting the population from? The author illustrates a number of examples of corruption in Afghan society at multiple echelons that seem outside the scope of the doctrine of counterinsurgency; Americans were doing too many things for the Afghans that they

should have been doing for themselves (The Limits of Counterinsurgency Doctrine in Afghanistan, p. 3).

Ethical Considerations

The introduction to this paper referred to counterinsurgency operations as ethically dubious; the reason for this position is that there is a fine line between conducting counterinsurgency operations in a failed or failing state and patrolling a garrisoned colony. That line is subject to the perspective of the counterinsurgent, the insurgent, or that of the citizen; is the counterinsurgent a liberator or an occupier? Is nation building in the interest of the armed forces, or is it something that should not be included in the mission set of America's warfighting organization? Despite the involvement of prominent social scientists and anthropologists in the development of counterinsurgency doctrine, there are those in academe that perceive counterinsurgency operations to be no different than a forerunner of imperialist colonial occupation. There has been ethical debate regarding involvement the involvement of anthropologists in particular, especially whether or not an anthropologist should participate in military operations. This ethical debate has led to further criticism of US foreign policy and military intervention.

Of particular interest to the social sciences community has been the appearance in the plans sections and on the battle spaces of anthropologists, involved in Human Terrain Teams and the Human Terrain System. A number of anthropologists have argued that these programs are unethical examples of cultural manipulation of other countries by the United States. The Human Terrain system involves social scientists familiar with the language, demographics, and history of the areas to provide insight to

commanders. Anthropologists have stood against the program, calling it a misuse of the work of the participating social scientists, due to the object of using the study of their colleagues to exploit that insight to further the interest of the United States[6]. This criticism extends beyond the involvement of social scientists in the CENTCOM Theater of operations; there has been further criticism of Human Terrain Analysis in the AFRICOM region of responsibility. This is criticism of the idea that the United States takes a systems approach to "solving problems" of different cultures, thereby indebting them to the United States and shaping the environment to make it more receptive to US diplomacy initiatives[7]. There is a lack of appreciation for foreign cultures inherent in counterinsurgency warfare, extending even to a perception of insurgents as not deserving the same respect as a lawful combatant; this lack of appreciation and respect can be interpreted by the host-nation population as racism and xenophobia.

Even when leadership roles in counterinsurgency operations, and in related projects, such as rule of law initiatives, are properly conducted by joint, interagency networks of allies, international government organizations, and nongovernmental organizations, there is a risk of the appearance of impropriety. As there is a fine line between an operation being called a "counterinsurgency operation" or being labeled an "effort at expeditionary neocolonialism", there is a similar line between providing assistance directed towards justice sector reform and what can be referred to as "capture" of the host nation government.

Analysis and Recommendations

This paper has attempted to examine counterinsurgency operations conducted since September 11th, 2001, and to discuss relevant successes and failures in terms of

these operation. Analysis of these operations, successes and failures leads to the conclusions discussed below.

Counterinsurgency operations are inherently non-kinetic. When conducted with the purpose of providing security and stability to a population whose government is attempting to maintain its legitimacy, counterinsurgency requires a large number of participating service members. COIN is diametrically opposed to the idea of a mobile, lethal military force. There has been some concern among military leaders and policy makers that participation in long-term counterinsurgency operations has cost the United States military its edge in the conduct of conventional warfare.

An alternative that has been attempted during recent conflicts is the incorporation of the military and the diplomatic into a single instrument of national power; Secretary Gates suggested that networked leadership was an essential element of success. Organizations subordinate to the Department of Defense have adopted this suggestion as doctrine, incorporating it into the Counterinsurgency and Stability Operations field manuals.

Counterinsurgency requires long term deployment of large formations. The Department of Defense is poorly equipped to maintain the large numbers of service members required for counterinsurgency. Repeated deployments cause a strain on the force; annual rotations cause additional issues, as discussed in Dr. Killcullen's fundamentals. Further, in recent years, the Department of Defense has been getting smaller, not larger; the concept of a light, lethal, modular force with a light foot print designed to rapidly deploy and redeploy is incompatible with the requirements of counterinsurgency operations.

A possible solution to this issue is to outsource the conduct of counterinsurgency operations to third parties within private industry. This solution would free the American military to train for conventional warfare, while providing the necessary security in failed or failing states to establish the legitimacy of the host-nation government. Although this solution might appear fantastic, it is not a particularly original idea. Many of those in government support the employment of contract employees rather than the retention of a large government workforce; this situation is no different. Where contract security forces might seem an expensive investment in the short term, in the long term, employment of contractors would save the taxpayer the costs of healthcare, housing, and retirement benefits that make up the military and federal government employee compensation[8].

Another alternative would be to utilize a United Nations peacekeeping force. Either situation takes the burden of these operations off of the US military and places it squarely on the shoulders of the community of nations.

Counterinsurgency operations are an unnecessary burden on the taxpayer. The cost of training, equipping, and deploying one Soldier to a combat theater is approximately $1 million. In addition, the various reconstruction and aid projects the military will engage in while deployed may cost the taxpayer billions of dollars. In addition to the rule of law initiatives discussed herein, other civil works projects cost money; the US military has been engaged in the business of building roads and schools, improving power infrastructure, and equipping security forces. Again, the labor for such efforts, and for the security of these endeavors, could be outsourced to private

industry. The costs of such efforts should be spread proportionately between the member states of the community of nations.

COIN operations should be conducted only when necessary. Counterinsurgency is not far removed from colonial occupation and warfare. It is too easy for America's enemies to gain political tempo by rebranding efforts at maintaining international security as attempts to establish an empire. Even when assistance is provided by a leadership network of nodes from the international community, nongovernmental organizations, and the host nation community, there is only a slight distinction between requiring "governance reform" and "capturing" a government. Where western entities might perceive problems with the host nation government, these issues might be integral parts of the indigenous culture.

It is interesting to consider whether or not the United States military should be involved in this type of warfare at all. From a social sciences perspective, it seems that America should stay out of low-intensity conflicts; it is too easy for there to exist a perception of impropriety, as the United States chooses sides in a conflict, supports one side in a contest for the legitimate governance of a people, and demands of that side reforms that adopt principles of liberal Western democracy. Nation building is too close to establishing colonies. The American military has the capability to quickly project large formations anywhere in the world, and to act as an instrument of the political will of the people of the United States. Political will is another consideration – the American people have a short attention span for low-intensity conflicts; they have a very low tolerance for the death of United States service members serving in them. As COIN

operations by nature require large numbers of troops fighting against an enemy hiding among the people, they are generally not palatable to the people of the United States.

Conclusion

As America enters its sixteenth year of active engagement in Afghanistan and commits additional forces to the fighting in Iraq, professional discussion of counterinsurgency warfare continues. Prominent leaders like General David Petraeus developed doctrine that was employed successfully in Iraq and less so in Afghanistan; Generals Odierno and McChrystal were employed to make Petraeus theory and strategy operational. The military careers of these officers have since concluded, but their influence lives on in the current operations against the Islamic State and other insurgent organizations. As the campaign in Iraq wound down, successful counterinsurgency operations were perceived as feasible; indeed, General Odierno argued that the wars of the future would be conducted on a hybrid battlefield, between the United States and its allies and a combination of state and non-state actors[9]. Some of the key influencers of Petraeus' counterinsurgency doctrine have gone on to theorize that these hybrid battles will be fought in megacities along the littorals of enemy territories – though the authors argue that even the definition of littoral is changing, based on the range of platforms deployed from the ocean surface[10]. Regardless, it is still necessary to secure failed or failing states, and to facilitate their participation in the community of nations, lest they become safe havens for those who would do the developed world harm. The burden should not be that of the United States alone, rather, the cost should be spread amongst the members of the community of nations.

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Endnotes

[1] See Jeremy Black's *Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*
[2] Galula's purpose in writing *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* was to create a set of guidelines for understanding insurgency and conducting counterinsurgency operations.
[3] Krepinevich argues that the army attempted to use strategies and tactics that were better suited for conventional warfare, which, in fact were detrimental to the counterinsurgency mission
[4] Mark Moyar and Peter Mansoor are in agreement that Rumsfeld and Bremer bungled the end state.
[5] I am referring specifically to the Parwan Justice Complex at Bagram Air Field. There was, at one point, a great degree of joint and interagency coordination there.
[6] This passage specifically refers to the work of Roberto Gonzalez.
[7] This passage specifically refers to the writings of Robert Albro.
[8] An excellent argument for the deployment of contractors in lieu of government employees is made in the book "Network theory and the Public Sector"
[9] Ironically, in this same article in *Foreign Affairs*, General Odierno argued that fiscal constraints were necessitating cuts to manpower.
[10] Here I am specifically referring to Dr. Killcullen's book *Out of the Mountains*.